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municipal recreation bulletin

Ministry of Community and Social Services

Youth and Recreation Branch

Municipal government and recreation services

Municipal government is concerned with the personal welfare of the people within its jurisdiction. Along with education, health and welfare, recreation is an essential community service. It is a field of social welfare—a community service devoted to the enrichment of life through leisure.

In 1945, The Ontario Municipal Act and The Department of Education Act were amended, and appropriate regulations were issued under the latter legislation to enable any Ontario municipal council to establish a recreation committee to carry out "programs of recreation" and so qualify for provincial grants. The committee's function is the provision of recreational services to meet the needs of the whole community.

The council establishes the committee by adopting a by-law and designates it as the managing authority for municipal recreation programs. The committee is responsible for hiring the recreation staff, for organization, administration and maintenance.

However, the committee is not autonomous. It is the agent of the council and two of its members are councillors. Its budget is presented to council for approval and all disbursements for its programs are from the general funds of the municipality, unless it has permission to collect fees or charges from participants to meet the costs of particular programs.

The municipal recreation committee thus has dual responsibility:

(a)
to the municipal council for carrying out assigned duties according to established municipal procedures;
(b)
to all citizens of the community for the provision of leisure-time opportunities that meet their needs.

Objectives of the municipal recreation authority

The objectives of the municipal recreation committee may be stated as:

- to study and understand the structure and resources of the community;
- to involve the whole community in planning to meet recreational needs;
- to ensure that all ages, all classes, and all groups in the community are considered in the planning;
- to ensure the development of programs in areas neglected by other community agencies;
- to coordinate the use of all the recreation facilities in the community—those belonging to the municipality, including community centres, libraries and schools, and those controlled by voluntary organizations including churches.

The most effective contributions that a municipal government can make in the field of recreation are:

- to know the leaders (professional and volunteer) in the community and to ensure that the best use is made of them;
- to provide opportunities for the training and development of skilled volunteer leadership;
- to provide trained professional leadership when it is needed;
- to present for the approval of council, budgets and programs that are adequate to meet the needs of the community.

Values of community recreation programs

Adequate, well-balanced programs of recreation help to enrich the quality of life in a community and to increase inter-personal communication. They help to create humane social environments in which people can grow, and in which they have a real sense of belonging. Many social problems really begin with boredom.

From time to time the municipal recreation committee will need to evaluate its programs and Bulletin No. 11 in this series suggests some of the techniques to use and many

of the questions to be answered.

The recreation policy established by council and the committee should also be evaluated and some of the questions the planners should ask are these:

- Is encouragement given to the development of skills that can contribute to growth and enjoyment throughout the life of the individual?
- Is cooperative planning used to involve all the interested groups, agencies and associations?
- Have the different economic, cultural and social characteristics of the people been considered?
- Are the programs adequately led?
- Are programs planned with long-range effects in mind, as well as the immediate success or failure?
- Are all the resources of the community studied and adapted before consideration is given to building new facilities?

The challenge is to develop programs that enable each individual in the community to enjoy a way of life enriched by the leisure needed to grow toward fulfillment.

Appendix to Municipal Recreation Bulletin No. 3

Appointment of Municipal Committees and Boards Related to Recreation

The Municipal Recreation Committee is appointed by council after a by-law is passed under conditions outlined in The Department of Education Act and The Municipal Act.

The Community Centre Board is appointed by the municipal council after passage of a by-law under conditions of The Municipal Act and The Community Centres Act. The latter legislation is administered by the Ontario Department of Agriculture and Food, Agricultural and Horticultural Societies Branch.

The Board of Park Management is appointed following passage of a by-law under The Municipal Act and The Public Parks Act (Department of Municipal Affairs). Such a board of park management becomes an incorporated body and cannot be dissolved unless the ratepayers vote for the dissolution in a plebiscite, or a private bill is passed in the Ontario Legislature.

The Parks Board may be appointed under a section of The Municipal Act alone. Such a parks board may be dissolved by the municipal council at will.

The basic structure of all these bodies is the same. There are a number of appointed or co-opted citizens (usually 5) and a number of councillors (usually 2). All are appointed annually. The council is under no obligation to appoint lay persons to a recreation committee, a parks board or a community centre board; council itself may carry out the duties of such bodies.

Some municipalities have combined the functions of the recreation committee and the parks board (unless it is a board of park management) with those of local community centres boards to form a single committee. At present there is no provincial legislation regulating such consolidations.

As regional governments come into existence, regional councils may pass by-laws in respect of recreation, parks and community centres. Should the regional council set up these boards or committees, they will have no legal authority over the area municipalities.

Grants for Programs of Recreation

Any municipality that has established a municipal recreation committee by passing an approved by-law, and carried out programs of recreation is eligible to apply for grants under The Department of Education Act. Forms are sent each year to the clerk of each eligible municipality. Upon completion the financial statements and application forms are returned to the appropriate office of the Department of Education for the attention of the Youth and Recreation consultants.

Grants for programs of recreation are paid on the basis of a statement of the previous year's expenditures by the municipality. This means that when amalgamation occurs, a single grant will replace the several previously made to the area municipalities. They will need to give close attention to the recreation needs of their citizens and assess carefully the staff that will be needed to meet the needs.

The development of sound policy and program in recreation depends a good deal on qualified and creative professional staff. Area municipalities will have to take great care about their priorities and budgets in the first year following amalgamation, but recreation will not suffer where there is a strong committee and where the professionals are challenged to demonstrate their competence.

Regional Committees

Although the regional council's function in organized recreation is not spelled out in the legislation, such councils may establish recreation committees by passing by-laws under the terms of The Municipal Act and The Department of Education Act. When a number of area municipalities, each having a well developed recreation program, form a new region, there are a number of possibilities:

(a) The regional committee may function as a co-ordinating body. (preventing important events from clashing, locating new facilities to serve the whole region, encouraging regional festivals, parades, pageants, competitions).

(b) The regional recreation committee might take over the operation of all the major parks and sports facilities. It would provide for maintenance and program leadership staff wherever programs were operated. In this case the regional committee would also have to carry out the co-ordinating role described in (a) above.

(c) The regional recreation committee may provide liaison with the regional planning board and conservation authorities in developing recreation areas and facilities. This function could be combined with one or both of (a) and (b) above.

There are still other functions that a regional recreation committee might have. As long as the area municipalities retain active recreation departments, the regional committee will remain limited. This type of regional committee will consist of several appointed members probably representing the area municipalities' committees, plus some councillors and the usual ex officio staff.

If in time the regional recreation authority tends to gain power, the committee personnel might be entirely of the council. The fact is no one knows just what kind of recreation organizations will develop at regional levels in Ontario.